

Caregiver Connection

December 2009

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers

In honor of our kinship caregivers



This newsletter is called the Caregiver Connection because it goes out to all our caregivers. This month we would like to acknowledge the important contributions made by extended family members who have taken kinship children into their homes. When appropriate and capable relatives step forward to care for children they already know and love, research shows that kids do better and the trauma of placement is reduced.

Kinship caregivers often have children placed in their homes unexpectedly and without a lot of time to prepare. Yet they continue to step forward and make sacrifices to keep the children healthy, safe, and functioning successfully. Stretching that retirement income or juggling child care needs can be a new and challenging activity. Moving from being grandma to providing fulltime care can be stressful and may require changes in roles and relationships in the family.

We recognize the generous, caring spirit that grandmas, grandpas, aunts, uncles, and cousins bring to their caregiver role. Nearly 40% of children placed through the child welfare system in Washington are living with relatives. Clearly, without you we couldn't do it! Because of you, Washington State is number 3 in the nation in relative placements! We are proud of this accomplishment and we are proud of you!

1624 Statewide Regional Foster Parent Representatives

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Meet Kristie Lund

When you meet Kristie Lund today, what you see is a competent social service professional - knowledgeable, sympathetic and supportive of the relative caregivers she serves at Casey Family Programs. When you get to know a little bit more about her, though, you learn is that she has also walked a path that has led her in this direction, a path that she started down quite unexpectedly, back about 13 years ago.

At that time, back in 1996, Kristie's troubled, and pregnant, daughter came to live with her, trying to find stability as she waited for her child's birth. Five weeks after the baby girl was born, mom went to an appointment and never returned. Kristie realized quickly that there were new responsibilities in store for her and she took action to establish temporary custody to keep the baby safe.

Fast forward a few months and we find Kristie relocated from San Diego to Kent and looking for a way to share her experience and find support. She founded the Relatives as Parents Project with the help of Kent Youth & Family Services. That group continues to meet to this day.

But that is certainly not the end of Kristie's story. In 2003, she was again called to be a resource for her 10 month old grandson. Her daughter was again not capable of parenting her child.

These children are now permanent members of Kristie's household. At times it has been hard, and sometimes she has even thought that they might have been better off if they had been placed in adoptive homes. But Kristie knows that's not true. "They more than likely would not know any of their biological family, each other, or their bio mom who is now clean and sober. When my grandson came to live with me, many family members questioned my sanity, but I didn't see any other op-



tions," says Kristie. Oh – and then there is the richness and satisfaction she has experienced as she has watched these two grow into bright, high functioning children with no signs of the drug-affected lives they had started.

Kristie has wise words for the caregiver families she encounters – "I tell families about the whole emotional rollercoaster that you embark on when you become a kinship caregiver. These children's parents are a relative of yours. More often than not they are your own child. How do you balance that relationship with being a parent to their child? It is not an easy feat. Other family members may disagree with your decision to take these children, straining that relationship as well. Friends your own age often have social lives that don't include children anymore. I always tell other caregivers to find a support group. For that one time a week or one time a month you will find others who share your experiences and your ups and downs. You will also learn about valuable resources for you and the children you are raising. For that one two hour period you can actually think through a whole adult thought without interruption!"

Kristie's life is filled with children and family that she loves. She has found her way to help them become happy, healthy individuals who are excited about what life has to offer.

You can too.

This holiday season decorate and celebrate with safety in mind

Michelle Nunez, *Child Safety Educator*
Mary Bridge Children's Hospital

The holidays are an exciting time for children, it is important to be cautious of the potential toy safety and decorating hazards during this busy time of the year.

Each year, approximately 217,000 toy-related injuries are treated in hospital emergency rooms nationwide. Here are some toy safety tips to consider:

- **Make sure to buy age-appropriate toys.** All toys should be clearly marked if they have small parts; do not buy toys with small parts (or allow a child under age 3 to play with those kinds of toys belonging to an older sibling).
- **Identify dangerous small parts.** To be sure of a toy's size, use a small parts tester (or a toilet paper roll). Do not let small children play with anything that can fit into one of these cylinders.
- **Inspect toys to make sure they are in good repair.** Do not let young children play with toys that have straps, cords or strings longer than 7 inches, due to the risk of strangulation.
- **Actively supervise children.** Caregivers should actively supervise children playing with any toy that has small parts, moving parts, electrical or battery power, cords, or any other potentially risky component. Active supervision means keeping the child in sight, in reach and paying undivided attention.
- **Practice proper storage.** Teach children to put toys away after playing, to help prevent falls and unsupervised play, and make sure toys intended for younger children are stored separately from those for older children. Toy chests should be

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R-GAP is here!

R-Gap is the new subsidized relative guardianship program. It allows relative caregivers who take guardianship of children through the child welfare system to receive a subsidy similar to the foster care payment. In order to be eligible for this subsidy, the relative caregiver must become licensed as a foster parent. In addition, the children must be dependent and have resided in the licensed relative home for six months.

This new opportunity is a result of the Federal Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act passed by Congress in October 2008. The goal is to increase support for relative caregivers and to improve outcomes for kids.

If you are a relative who could benefit from this new program, contact your social worker now!

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equipped with safety hinges that prevent the lid from closing on a child; if a chest does not have safety hinges, remove the lid.

- Sign up for toy recalls. To sign up for recall emails, go to www.cpsc.gov and click on Sign up for Email Announcements.

Consider the following decorating safety recommendations this holiday season:

- Never leave a lit Christmas tree or other decorative lighting displays unattended. Inspect lights for exposed or frayed wires, loose connections and broken sockets. Do not overload extension cords or outlets and do not run an electrical cord under a rug.
- To minimize fire risk of natural Christmas trees, get a fresh tree and keep it watered at all times. Do not put the tree within three feet of a fireplace, space heater, radiator or heat vent.
- Do not put ornaments that have small parts or metal hooks, or look like food or candy, on the lower branches where small children can reach them.
- Holly berries, mistletoe berries, poinsettias, amaryllis, boxwood, Christmas rose, Crown of Thorns, English ivy and Jerusalem cherry are all potentially harmful if eaten. For more information, or to find out whether other decorative plants and products are hazardous to children, call the national Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

For more information on holiday decorating or toy safety, visit <http://www.usa.safekids.org>

Michelle Nunez is a child safety educator at the Center for Childhood Safety at Mary Bridge Children's Hospital in Tacoma, WA and the coordinator for Safe Kids Pierce County – a local coalition that focuses on preventing accidental injury for children under 14. Mary Bridge Children's Hospital is the proud lead organization for Safe Kids Pierce County. (www.multicare.org/childhoodsafety)

Sign up for the Listserv now!

Beginning with the February Caregiver Connection, issues will no longer be mailed with your checks. Instead, you will be sent the link to the electronic copy of the newsletter on the foster parent "news" webpage. And we will be changing the listserv name to caregiver instead of fosterparent. So everyone will have access to the newsletter on the web.

Of course, you will only get the link if you sign up to be on the listserv. Log on to <http://listserv.wa.gov>, scroll down to "fosterparent", (at least for now), and click on "join or remove".

We really want you to continue to receive the information and articles included in Caregiver Connection! Don't forget to subscribe! If you have no internet access and would like to continue receiving a hard copy, we will work to get you one. Please call Dinah Martin at 360-902-0740 and make your request

ProviderOne announces a schedule change

On October 23, 2009, ProviderOne announced that the previously announced go-live date of December 6, 2009 isn't viable. January 10, 2010 is the next possible go-live date. In the coming weeks, we will be working closely with the system vendor to monitor the viability of a January go-live date and **adjust the official go-live date, if necessary.**

Since announcing the December 6, 2009 implementation date last July, we have carefully monitored readiness of the system, providers, DSHS staff, and our vendor. Considering system readiness alone, the state has determined that December 6, 2009 is not a viable launch date. This decision was supported by external quality assurance and independent verification and validation vendors.

This means that Services Cards were not mailed in November, to be used beginning in December. Discussions are continuing as to what the new schedule will be, and we will let you know when that decision is made.

For more information, go to the ProviderOne website at: <http://hrsa.dshs.wa.gov/ProviderOne/Clients.htm>



Post Adoption **Support**

Helping each other

In these challenging times, helping each other may be an underutilized resource.

An ad created by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption states:

Adopting a child can be the most rewarding, joyful events of your life. It can also bring a unique set of challenges. It is important for parents to understand that post adoption challenges are a normal part of the adoption process and that with help and support, children can thrive in a permanent loving home.

Our state offers post adoption services within its regional administered programs. Your regional adoption program manager can be a connection to resources within program parameters. However, adoptive parents talking to each other offer the best support services. Finding adoptive parents who live in the same geographical area can be challenging. Your input on how we can create a resource which brings together geographically linked parents would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Lonnie Locke at lolo300@dshs.wa.gov, or call 1-800-562-5682.

Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers* 509-363-3383
Pam Copeland* 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland* 509-225-6500
Carol Cyr 509-225-6531
(Financial Specialist)

Region 3 – Monroe

Steve Foster* 360-805-3032
Linda Richardson* 360-805-3030

Region 4 – Bellevue

Aaron Washington* 425-590-3072
Jenne Norris 425-590-3069
(Social Worker)

Region 5 – Tacoma

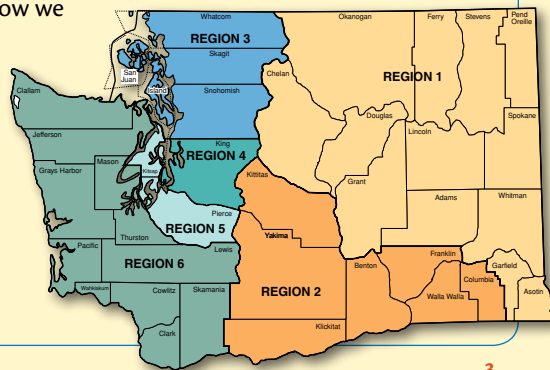
Cindy Anderson* 253-983-6359
Laura Davis* 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett* 360-725-6758
Kim Mower* 360-725-6778

Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
(listen carefully to the recorded message)

* Adoption Support Consultants



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

Exciting news! Mental health services expands for children

Medicaid Fee for Service Mental Health Outpatient Benefit for Children

Beginning on July 1, 2008, Washington State legislation instituted Second Substitute House Bill 1088 which revises Medicaid Fee-For-Service (FFS) Mental Health Outpatient Benefit for Children.

Statewide, there are now over 850 FFS mental health care providers available for children that are

- under 19 years old,
- have a mild to moderate mental health issue
 - Regional Support Network (RSN) mental health Access to Care Standards are not met.

Department of Health and Social Services Health and Rehabilitative Services is partnering with Department of Health to increase the provider network.

If you have mental health concerns for the child in your care, please contact the assigned social worker and request a referral for comprehensive mental health evaluation and ongoing services. Children with mental health concerns should be referred to RSN community mental health before referring to Medicaid FFS providers.

What types of FFS Mental Health providers are available to children?

- Licensed Psychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Licensed Psychiatric Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners
- Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers
- Licensed Advanced Social Workers
- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists
- Licensed Mental Health Counselors

What are the provider qualifications?

- Must be licensed by the Department of Health (DOH) under the appropriate licensure, be in good standing with DOH, and be without DOH restriction, and
- All providers who participate in the network have at least two years experience in mental health diagnosis and the treatment of children.
- At least one of these years under supervision of mental health professional trained in child and family mental health.

What services does the Medicaid FFS benefit provide?

- A mental health intake and diagnosis, and
- Up to 20 outpatient therapy visits per child, by a mental health professional.

How do clients pay for FFS benefit services?

- The child's medical coupon will cover the services, which are paid by Medicaid.

Who should I contact for more information?

- The child's social worker